

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04034 181222Z

ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4912

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4034

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, IS, LE

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: TEL AVIV 6078

1. APPRECIATE AMBASSADOR LEWIS' TENACITY AND SUCCESS IN GETTING ISRAELIS TO GIVE COMMITMENT REGARDING WILLINGNESS TO DISSUADE CHRISTIAN MILITIA FROM OCCUPYING VILLAGES WHICH MAY BE EVACUATED BY THE PALESTINIANS. (IN THIS REGARD, SINCE MOST OF THE VILLAGES IN QUESTION ARE SHIA, CHRISTIAN OCCUPATION OF THEM WOULD POSE INTERNAL PROBLEMS WHICH BELIEVE MARONITES OF THE SOUTH WOULD NOT WISH TO PROVOKE. WHILE THEY MIGHT WISH TO MOVE INTO FEW PLACES LIKE TAIBE TEMPORARILY, BELIEVE THEY WOULD DO SO ONLY ON A TEMPORARY BASIS BECAUSE LONG TERM RELATIONS WITH SHIA WOULD NOT PERMIT THEM TO REMAIN LONG.)

2. BELIEVE WE CAN BE SURE ANY FORCES SENT TO SOUTH LEBANON WOULD NOT HAVE SYRIANS AMONG THEM. HOW TIGHTLY KHOURY WILL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THEM IS SOMETHING WE CANNOT FORESEE WITH ANY CLARITY. THE TROOPS ARE LIKELY TO BE UNDER STRAINS AND STRESSES WHICH ARE GOING TO TAX LEBANESE COMMAND CAPABILITIES. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT KHOURY IS UP TO THE JOB. WE SHOULD NOT IN ANY CASE BE IN A POSITION WHERE WE ARE ALLOWING THE ISRAELIS TO DECIDE

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UNILATERALLY WHETHER THESE TROOPS ARE UNDER SYRIAN CONTROL.

3. TWO ASPECTS OF REFTEL CONCERN ME, HOWEVER. ONE IS AMBASSADOR LEWIS' BELIEF THAT ISRAELIS WILL KNOW THAT NO COMMENT OR NO RESPONSE MEANS NON-APPROVAL FOR NAQOURA OPERATION. I THINK HISTORY OF THE PAST TEN YEARS AMPLY

DEMONSTRATES THAT WE MUST BE ABSOLUTELY EXPLICIT IN TELLING THE ISRAELIS WHAT WE EXPECT OF THEM. ASSUMING PM BEGIN'S REPLY TO PRESIDENT CARTER INCLUDES SENTENCE PROMITING THAT ISRAEL WILL NO ACT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AGAINST THE PRESIDENT'S WISHES OR WITHOUT HIS PRIOR APPROVAL (PARA 2 REFTTEL), WE SHOULD REFER TO THIS AND SAY THE PRESIDENT IS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO ANY INCURSION BY ISRAELI MILITARY FORCES INTO LEBANON. I DO NOT BELIEVE WE CAN RELY ON THEIR NOT MISINTERPRETING TO THEIR OWN ADVANTAGE WHATEVER WE SAY WHEN EVER IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO DO SO.

4. THE SECOND PHRASE THAT DISTURBS ME IS REFERENCE TO THE SECRETARY HAVING TOLD ASAD THAT PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE MOVED NORTH OF THE LITANI. I DO NOT FIND SUCH A STATEMENT IN OUR RECORD OF THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGES AND CONVERSATIONS WITH ASAD. MOVEMENT NORTH OF THE LITANI IS OF COURSE AN ISRAELI DESIDERATUM. I DID NOT KNOW WE HAD SIGNED ON TO THIS, HOWEVER, AND HOPE WE DID NOT, BECAUSE AS LONG AS THERE ARE PALESTINIAN CAMPS SOUTH OF THE LITANI SUCH AS THE TWO LARGE CAMPS OUTSIDE TYRE, THERE IS GOING TO BE A PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE. POSSIBLY THE NUMBER OF ARMED PALESTINIANS SOUTH OF THE LITANI CAN BE REDUCED BUT NOT UNTIL EITHER THE LEBANENE OR OTHER ACCEPTABLE FORCES ARE IN A POSITION TO SUBSTITUTE THEIR OWN ARMED PRESENCE. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, THE SHTAURA
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AGREEMENT CALLS FOR THE PALESTINIANS TO PULL BACK ONLY 15 KILOMETERS FROM THE BORDER. IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT MORE AT THIS POINT.

5. RECOMMEND THIS MESSAGE BE REPEATED TO DAMASCUS AND TEL AVIV.
PARKER

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

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